

### **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of the claims replaces all prior versions of the claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A sample holder system for an automated sample analyzer, comprising:

a first well strip comprising a plurality of wells, a first end, a second end, side walls, a first engagement piece, and a second engagement piece wherein said first and second engagement pieces are disposed on the same side wall of the first well strip, said wells each comprising a bottom base for containing a sample for analysis; and

at least a second well strip comprising a plurality of wells, a first end, a second end, and a second engagement piece identical to the second engagement piece of the first well strip, wherein,

the first engagement piece disposed on said first well strip and the second engagement piece disposed on the second well strip connect together to reversibly attach said first well strip to said second well strip to form a sample holder system.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously Presented) The sample holder system of claim 1 wherein said first well strip and said second well strip are identical.

4. (Previously Presented) The sample holder system of claim 1 wherein said first engagement piece of said first well strip is positioned substantially adjacent the first end of the first well strip, the second engagement piece of said first well strip is positioned substantially adjacent the second end of said first well strip, and said second engagement piece of said second well strip is positioned substantially adjacent the first end of said second well strip.

5. (Previously Presented) The sample holder system of claim 1 wherein said first engagement piece and said second engagement piece of said first well strip are positioned on a first side wall of said first well strip and said second engagement piece of said second well strip is positioned on a second side wall of said second well strip.

6. (Previously Presented) The sample holder system of claim 1 wherein said first engagement piece of said first well strip and said second engagement piece of said second well strip are reversibly interlockable by horizontally sliding said first well strip relative to said second well strip.
7. (Previously Presented) The sample holder system of claim 1 further comprising a first engagement piece of said second well strip identical to the first engagement piece of the first well strip positioned on a same side wall as the second engagement piece of the second well strip.
8. (Previously Presented) The sample holder system of claim 1 wherein said first engagement piece comprises a flange and said second engagement piece comprises a slot and a slit.
9. (Previously Presented) The sample holder system of claim 1 wherein said first engagement piece is positioned at the first end of the first well strip and comprises a flange, and said second engagement piece is positioned at said second end of said second well strip and comprises a slot and a slit.
10. (Previously Presented) The sample holder system of claim 7 wherein said second engagement piece of the second well strip comprises a slot and said first engagement piece of the second well strip comprises a flange.
11. (Canceled)
12. (Currently Amended) An interlockable well strip, comprising:
  - a first wall on said well strip;
  - a second wall on said well strip;
  - a plurality of wells in said well strip, wherein said wells each comprise a bottom base for containing a sample for analysis;
  - a first engagement piece on said first wall of said well strip capable of interlocking another well strip; and

a first engagement piece on said second wall of said well strip capable of interlocking another well strip, wherein

said first engagement piece on said first wall of said well strip is identical to the first engagement piece on said second wall of said well strip.

13. (Previously Presented) The interlockable well strip of claim 12 wherein said first engagement piece on said first wall of said well strip is substantially positioned near a first end of said well strip and said first engagement piece on said second wall of said well strip is substantially positioned near a second end of said well strip.

14. (Previously Presented) The interlockable well strip of claim 12 wherein said first engagement piece on said first wall of said well strip is positioned on a first side wall of said well strip and said first engagement piece on said second wall of said well strip is positioned on a second side wall of said well strip.

15. (Previously Presented) The interlockable well strip of claim 12 wherein said first engagement piece on said first wall of said well strip comprises a flange and the first engagement piece on said second wall of said well strip comprises a flange.

16. (Previously Presented) The interlockable well strip of claim 13 further comprising a second engagement piece on a first wall of said well strip at said first end and a second engagement piece on a second wall of said well strip at said second end.

17-26. (Canceled)

27. (Previously Presented) A sample holder system comprising:

a first well strip comprising a plurality of wells, a first and second side wall, and a first and second end; and,

at least a second well strip comprising a plurality of wells, a first and second side wall, and a first and a second end;

each of said first well strip and said at least a second well strip further comprising

a first flange on said first end of said first side wall and a first flange on said second end of said second side wall, wherein said first flange on said first end of said first side wall is identical to said first flange on said second end of said second side wall; and

a first slot on said second end of said first side wall, and a first slot on said first end of said second side wall, wherein said first slot on said second end of said first side wall is identical to said first slot on said first end of said second side wall; and wherein said first slot and said first flange of said second side wall of said first well strip interlocks with said first flange and said first slot of said first side wall of said second well strip to form a sample holder system.

28. (New) The sample holder system of claim 1 wherein said first well strip and said second well strip reversibly attach by sliding a side wall of the first well strip longitudinally along a side wall of said second well strip.

29. (New) The sample holder system of claim 1 wherein said wells each comprise an optical window.

30. (New) The sample holder system of claim 29 wherein said optical window is clear.

31. (New) The sample holder system of claim 30 wherein said optical window is substantially flat.

32. (New) The interlockable well strip of claim 12 wherein said wells each comprise an optical window.

33. (New) The interlockable well strip of claim 32 wherein said optical window is clear.

34. (New) The interlockable well strip of claim 33 wherein said optical window is substantially flat.